Command terms in IB Economics

Command terms are used to indicate the depth of treatment of topics. The command term used in the guide indicate the level of treatment that may be expected in exams. They are classified according to the assessment objectives of:

AO1 = knowledge and understanding of specified content

Progression in skills

AO2 = application and analysis

AO3 = synthesis and evaluation

AO4 = Selection, use and application of appropriate skills and techniques

Specific skills and techniques

A command term used in an examination question will either be from the same classification as specified in the learning outcomes or a less demanding command term from a lower classification. For example, if the command term in the learning outcomes is ‘explain’ (AO2), an examination question could contain the command term ‘explain’, or any other command term which is classified as AO2 (such as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_). Alternatively, the examination question could contain a command term from AO1, a ‘lower skill level’, such as describe or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. If the command term in the learning outcomes is AO2, it would not be permissible to set an examination question in a higher classification than AO2.

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| **Assessment objective** | **Command terms** | **Depth** | **Example from syllabus** |
| AO1 – knowledge and understanding | Define | Give the precise meaning of a word, phrase, concept or physical quantity. |  |
| Describe | Give a detailed account. |  |
| List | Give a sequence of brief answers with no explanation. |  |
| Outline | Give a brief account or summary. |  |
| State | Give a specific name, value or other brief answer without explanation or calculation |  |
| AO2 – application and analysis | Analyse | Break down in order to bring out the essential elements or structure. |  |
| Apply | Use an idea, equation, principle, theory or law in relation to a given problem or issue. |  |
| Comment | Give a judgment based on a given statement or result of a calculation. |  |
| Distinguish | Make clear the differences between two or more concepts or items. |  |
| Explain | Give a detailed account including reasons or causes. |  |
| Suggest | Propose a solution, hypothesis or other possible answer. |  |
| **Assessment objective** | **Command terms** | **Depth** | **Example from syllabus** |
| AO3 – Synthesis and evaluation | Compare | Give an account of the similarities between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout. |  |
| Compare and contrast | Give an account of similarities and differences between two (or more) items or situations, referring to both (all) of them throughout. |  |
| Discuss | Offer a considered and balanced review that includes a range of arguments, factors or hypotheses. Opinions or conclusions should be presented clearly and supported by appropriate evidence. |  |
| Evaluate | Make an appraisal by weighing up the strengths and limitations |  |
| Examine | Consider an argument or concept in a way that uncovers the assumptions and interrelationships of the issue. |  |
| Justify | Give valid reasons or evidence to support an answer or conclusion. |  |
| To what extent . . . | Consider the merits or otherwise of an argument or concept. Opinions and conclusions should be presented clearly and supported with appropriate evidence and sound argument. |  |
| **Assessment objective** | **Command terms** | **Depth** | **Example from syllabus** |
| AO4 – selection, use and application of appropriate skills and techniques | Calculate | Obtain a numerical answer showing the relevant stages in the working. |  |
| Construct | Display information in a diagrammatic or logical form. |  |
| Derive | Manipulate a mathematical relationship to give a new equation or relationship. |  |
| Determine | Obtain the only possible answer. |  |
| Draw | Represent by means of a labelled, accurate diagram or graph, using a pencil. A ruler (straight edge) should be used for straight lines. Diagrams should be drawn to scale. Graphs should have points correctly plotted (if appropriate) and joined in a straight line or smooth curve |  |
| Identify | Provide an answer from a number of possibilities. |  |
| Label | Add labels to a diagram |  |
| Measure | Obtain a value for a quantity. |  |
| Plot | Mark the position of points on a diagram |  |
| Show | Give the steps in a calculation or derivation. |  |
| Show that | Obtain the required result (possibly using information given) without the formality of proof. “Show that” questions do not generally require the use of a calculator. |  |
| Sketch | Represent by means of a diagram or graph (labelled as appropriate). The sketch should give a general idea of the required shape or relationship, and should include relevant features. |  |
| Solve | Obtain the answer(s) using algebraic and/or numerical and/or graphical methods. |  |